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Military-political Trends within the CIS during the Chechen Campaign

Part II: Bilateral Approaches

Zusammenfassung

Apart from multilateral agreements Russia develops special links to some strategic important CIS members. A development toward the resurrection of Soviet-styled armed forces is not likely within the CIS. More so, however, are the efforts to bring about Russian-led military forces on a regional level. Three main directions can be discerned: the Eastern Axis (Russia-Kazakhstan), the Western Axis (Belarus-Moldova-Kaliningrad), and Transcaucasus. In all these areas, treaties on military cooperation have been signed during the first half of 1995. The article shows that the trend towards increased military cooperation on a regional level within the CIS seems largely unaffected by Russia's military campaign in Chechnya.

Implementation of the Collective Security Treaty

A serious attempt to put the Collective Security Treaty into practice was made at the 10 February Summit.¹ Thirteen documents were discussed, however only three were finally adopted.

- Concept on Collective Security (guidelines for the deepening of military cooperation under the same treaty).

¹ This was followed up in September by President Yeltsin's endorsement of the country's strategic policy towards the CIS. The policy is based on the collective security treaty and bilateral treaties between CIS states. See Interfax 16 September 1995. In FBIS-SOV-95-180 p. 1.

- Declaration of the Participating States of the Collective Security Treaty
- Memorandum on Peace and Stability in the CIS states.

The memorandum was initially drafted as a pact by Kazakhstan, but because of disagreements it was watered down to a memorandum.

In the declaration¹, principles for the security system are spelled out. It is to be implemented in stages. First the creation of the armed forces in the participating states are to be "basically completed," and military-technical cooperation is to have started. In the second stage coalition (joint) troop (force) groupings are to be created to repel possible aggression and a joint air defence system will be created. In the final stage the creation of the collective security system will be completed.

These guidelines were further discussed in May, when a plan for implementing the concept of collective security, and the basic guidelines for deepening military cooperation between CIS states was approved. The plan spans the period through the year 2 000. It envisages the creation of regional coalition forces, the elaboration of operations plans for their use in the event of aggression and the holding of command-staff games. Measures have been planned to coordinate efforts in the sphere of the development and production of arms and combat equipment, material supplies for the troops. The army paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* labelled it as a "highly serious document."

These are, however, guidelines and principles. The concrete ways of actually creating military integration have not been realised. The plans about what the future should hold are not lacking. The integration will start with the formation of a chiefs of staff committee and four regional collective security zones, according to Leonid Ivashov, secretary of the CIS Defence Ministers' Council. Four military regions are planned to be set up on CIS territory. Western, Eastern, Central Asian, and Caucasus zones will unite nine CIS member states, to be cooperated with on an irregular basis by Ukraine , Moldova and Turkmenistan.²

The Western Zone would have Belarus "as the key element" and include the Kaliningrad and Smolensk regions of Russia. The Caucasus Zone would include Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and the North Caucasus republics of Russia. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and part of Kyrgyzstan would form the Central Asian Zone, with Turkmenistan cooperating "on some elements." Finally, the Eastern Zone would be made up of Kazakhstan and those parts of Russia and Kyrgyzstan not in other zones. Furthermore, Ivashov envisions "Coalition Defence Forces" which would train jointly and have common standards. The proposals are to be submitted to the CIS heads of states at the end of 1995.

These plans were taken one step further at a meeting of the CIS Defence Ministers in April. A decision was made to set up a Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of the CIS Armed Forces as part of the Staff for the Coordination of Military Cooperation. According Ivashov, the committee will conduct "profound analysis of program, theoretical, and practical matters and the coordination of the operations of CIS armies' staff".³

A development with regional collective forces is perhaps a likely development as a base for CIS military cooperation. As we have seen, efforts from Moscow point in this direction. Furthermore, there are indications that such forces are being set up in Transcaucasus.⁴

Bilateral military agreements

There are several kinds of treaties within the framework of the CIS. Multilateral treaties are made more concrete through bilateral treaties. In case the multilateral treaties fail or cannot be agreed, the bilateral

¹ *Diplomaticheskii Vestnik*, No. 3, 1995, pp. 33-37.

² *Interfax*, 14 February 1995. In SWB SU/2229 A/2 (16 February). In April 1995 a preliminary agreement was reached that at least one Russian Air defence aviation squadron will be based in Turkmenistan.

³ *OMRI Daily Digest*, 26 April 1995, Vol. 1., No. 82

⁴ *Itar-TASS*, 13 April 1995. In SWB SU/2280 S1/5 (18 April 1995).

treaties can be seen as an alternative. The bilateral agreements can be divided into the following four categories.¹

- Friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance
- Friendship, cooperation and mutual security
- Friendship and cooperation
- Military agreements

The Eastern Axis - Russia and Kazakhstan

The first agreement of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance within the CIS was reached between Russia and Kazakhstan 25 May 1992. It has since been followed up by several bilateral treaties, for instance on military issues 28 March 1994. The documents signed by the presidents on 20 January 1995 took issues a bit further.² All in all they signed 17 agreements, including two agreements on issues of citizenship, an agreement on military-technical cooperation and the creation of a customs union.

In the declaration on expanding and deepening Russian-Kazakh cooperation the presidents vow that "from 1995 the parties will begin forming unified armed forces based on the principles of joint planning, training and use of troops (forces) and provision of weapons and military equipment for them, and under conditions where they will be stationed without hindrance, operate, enjoy most-favoured status..." (No. 10) In addition, they declared that "in conditions where the borders between the two states are open, the protection of their external border is their common task, and will be carried out jointly in accordance with the interests of their own security and the collective security of the CIS. To this end a treaty on joint protection of external borders, envisaging the creation of a joint command for the border troops will be signed by 10th February 1995 by the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation." (No. 12). The two countries are also to cooperate closely on foreign policy (No. 13) and to coordinate their foreign economic policies (No. 3).

The creation of unified armed forces may sound clear enough, but there is considerable confusion about what this actually means. The chief of the Kazakh General Staff, Alibek Kasymov, declared that "these joint armed forces will not be a single armed force along the lines of the Soviet Army. That could frighten some people/.../ Our approach is that these will be national armed forces joined on the basis of certain principles."³ He also stated that he found the "NATO option most attractive," and dismissed the CIS Joint Armed Forces as unsuitable.

The Western Axis - Belarus, Moldova and Kaliningrad

Belarus and Russia were never far apart, and have been trying to cooperate in most spheres, not the least economically. On 21 February Russia and Belarus signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, where the two countries pledge to have open borders between themselves (Article 4) and to consult each other on foreign policy (Article 3).⁴ Among the agreements reached, a treaty concerning the borders were signed. The treaty contains a definition of what constitutes security on the borders with Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. In practice, this means that Russia is shifting its border interests far to the west of the administrative borders. The Belarusian border troops will be coordinated from Moscow even if the

¹ Boris Meissner, Das politische Paktsystem innerhalb der GUS, Osteuropa-Recht, September 1994, 3/94, pp. 226-254.

² Diplomaticheskii Vestnik, 1995, No. 2, p. 40-48.

³ Kazakhstanskaya Pravda 7 February 1995. In JPRS-UMA-95-007 pp. 70-71.

⁴ Diplomaticheskii Vestnik, 1995, No. 3, pp. 38-42.

commander will still be Belarusian. His deputy will be Russian. Practical details on joint border troops were not finalised. In addition, it was decided that Russia will lease the two early-warning system sites in Vileyka and Baranavichy for 25 years.

The recent developments in Moldova, the youngest member of the CIS, have implications for a future security system. The withdrawal of the 14th army was agreed in October 1994.¹ It provided for a withdrawal in three stages. The first two stages involves the pull-out of weapons and military hardware, with troops to be withdrawn in the final stage.

The accord has still to be ratified by the Russian parliament, and even if it does become ratified it is not likely to mean that Russian troops will leave Moldova entirely. Despite the fact of Moldova's declared neutrality policy, Moscow does not rule out the possibility of having troops in Moldova. As late as July, Moscow began, for the first time since 1992, to send Russian conscripts to reinforce its units in the Transdnister region. Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, has made it clear that Russia would like to have a military base with some 3,500 servicemen in that region.² The military's view is that the Russian troops stabilise the situation in the republic, and President Yeltsin has stated that Russian troops' stay in Moldova "can be reviewed at any time."³

Even if the current Russian military doctrine does not regard any state an enemy to Russia, Moldova is of strategic importance, and would form an important place for the mobile forces that are currently being planned for.⁴

This is no less true, of course, for Kaliningrad oblast. Apart from an agreement with Lithuania in January 1995 to extend military transit regulations until the end of 1995, the future plans for the oblast are not publicly discussed. However, last year Komsomolskaya Pravda reported on the Defence Ministry's plans for creating a "special defence region" in Kaliningrad. It would contain large groupings of ground forces, military aviation, air defence forces, and naval units. These forces would cooperate with Border Troops and, possibly, with Internal Ministry Forces. The special force would be subordinated directly to the Defence Ministry and General Staff.⁵

Transcaucasus

Transcaucasus has for obvious reasons been an area of high tensions and sensitivity during the Chechen campaign. In March, Russian army bases were secured in both Armenia and Georgia. According to the treaty with Armenia the 127th Motorised Rifle Division will be stationed in Gyumri in north west Armenia.⁶ A Russian command group will be stationed in Yerevan and a motorised rifle regiment. The 25-year treaty will be automatically extended for five years, unless one of the sides objects. The Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev noted that "close and constructive military and military-technical cooperation between Russia and Armenia could serve as an example for other Commonwealth countries."⁷

¹ Diplomaticheskii Vestnik, 1994, No. 21-22, pp. 46-51.

² OMRI Daily Digest, 28 June 1995, Vol. 1, No. 125.

³ Itar-TASS, 28 June 1995. In FBIS-SOV-95-124 pp. 12-13.

⁴ See for instance Sean Kay, "The Political Victory of the Russian Military: Assessing the Impact on the New Military Doctrine," December 1993, June 1994, University of Massachusetts & Amherst. C. J. Dick: "Initial Thoughts on Russia's Draft Military Doctrine And Russia's Draft Military Doctrine, 10 Months On", July 1992, April 1993, Soviet Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst. Rossiyskaya Gazeta 29 June 1995. In FBIS-SOV-95-125. The current Russian Military Doctrine was adopted on 2 November 1993, but President Yeltsin has hinted that a new one is being developed. See Yeltsin's message to the Federal Assembly, note 1.

⁵ RFE/RL Daily Report, 23 March 1994.

⁶ Segondya, 17 March 1995 "Prezident Yeltsin i Ter-Petrosyan podpisali dogovor o voennoi base." Diplomaticheskii Vestnik, 1995, No. 4, p. 36.

⁷ Krasnaya Zvezda, 25 March 1995, "Vazhnyi faktor bezopasnosti."

The joint exercise held later in March had according to the Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev been prepared in the light of the shortcomings in troop command and combat use revealed by the Chechen conflict. The Georgian Defence Minister, Vardiko Nadibaidze, who was present at the final stage of the Armenian-Russian joint military exercises voiced a hope that in the near future not only bilateral, but also trilateral military exercises with participation of Georgian units would be held.

According to the agreement between Russia and Georgia, there will be four Russian military bases in Gudauta, Batumi, Akhalkalaki and Vaziani.¹ It is a 25 year agreement.

In the light of these developments in Transcaucasus, it is interesting to take a brief look at the Russian military's view on the treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE treaty). It is not new that the Russian military has been critical of the treaty ever since it came into force on 17 July 1992. By this time the circumstances had changed dramatically since the treaty was signed in November 1990 and both the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact had ceased to exist.² At one point the Russian even sought the support of Ukraine, since the treaty would also affect the Odessa military district. When Ukraine maintained their compliance with the treaty, the Russians were alone in their efforts to renegotiate the flank limits.³ The view of the military was made explicit when Vladimir Semyonov, commander of the Russian ground forces acknowledged that the creation of the 58th Army in the North Caucasus Military District would violate the terms of the CFE treaty but that "the interests of Russian security integrity must prevail over the terms of this document." General Anatolii Kvashnin, commander of the North Caucasus military district was even more blunt: "Only a complete idiot would comply with the flank limits of the CFE."⁴

Even if the opinions of the foreign ministry are not always expressed in the same frank way, they nevertheless correspond with the military's view. President Yeltsin set the tone in his annual address when he pointed out that "it is important that we find ways to resolve the well-known problem of the flank restrictions" under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe - a problem that has arisen visibly in the North Caucasus."⁵

Conclusions

As we have seen, Russia has signed a number of military-political treaties, both bilateral and multilateral, within the CIS, during the first half of 1995. In addition, ideas and proposal about a future CIS military system have been publicly discussed. But will all these treaties be implemented, and if so what conclusions can be drawn? The question about the implementation is highly appropriate since literally hundreds of documents have been signed between the CIS member states without ever coming into practice. However, the signing of the treaties - at least the military related which are being examined here - points in a certain direction, and forms a base for future actions. The issue of military integration is, obviously, largely dependent on economic and political integration. When the Russian Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, talked about military reform in the Russian army he shortly remarked that "if there will be money there will be reform." The same is true for CIS military integration.

Furthermore, there are still unsolved problems, the most striking perhaps both politically and militarily, Russia's relations with Ukraine. In spite of continuous efforts, the two countries have not yet signed a Treaty of Friendship, largely because of the dispute about the Black Sea Fleet.

However, the trend of a Russian-led military domination, based on a regional level, within the CIS is

¹ Ibid.

² Douglas L. Clarke. "The Russian Military and the CFE Treaty", RFE/RL Research Report, 22 October 1993, Vol. 2, No. 42, pp. 38-43.

³ Segondya, 27 April 1995, "Novaya armiya na Kavkaze "ne vvisyvaetsya" v dogovor ob OVSE".

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rossiyskaya Gazeta. 17 February 1995. In SWB SU/2233/S1 (21 February 1995).

clear. The Chechen campaign has not changed this, especially not with the agreements on Russian military bases in Armenia and Georgia. It could also be argued that the Chechen campaign could serve as a deterrent for the countries in Russia's "near abroad" to resist the integration process. This is true especially for the weaker states in Transcaucasus and Central Asia.¹ It is doubtful, whether one could claim that the latest military developments are a result of a "new" Russian strategy. The Russian military view on the CIS cooperation has not changed substantially since the creation of the CIS. The "new" feature is the recent concrete results.

¹ Yerevan Yerkir. 22 December 1994. In FBIS-SOV-95-023-S. Pages 71-72. See also Rossiyskiye Vesti 26 January 1995. In FBIS-SOV-95-018, pp. 23-24.

Even if it seems unlikely today to view the CIS military cooperation as an alliance that will become a counterweight to an expanded NATO, as Komsomolskaya Pravda reported to be the opinion of the staff working on military reform¹, it is no less indicative of the thinking in some Russian military circles. During the first half of 1995, the events point toward a stronger regional military cooperation between the members of the CIS Collective Security System.

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¹ Komsomolskaya Pravda, 11 April 1995. In FBIS-SOV-95-069 pp. 27-28.